

REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 6 - May 2011 -

From the editor

May 2011

With thankfulness to the Lord we may present the 6th edition of the Magazine.

This time it is a special edition about our churches and all that is happening concerning our churches.

A lot is being written about our churches in a negative manner. That is why we have included a number of articles written by the brothers A. van Egmond and L. Menninga in this Magazine, with which we wish to refute the distorted view of our churches.

Two articles written by Rev. S. de Marie about true ecumenism, deal with the same matter. These articles, published earlier in De Bazuin, have been translated and included in this issue.

Also translated and included in this issue is the correspondence between the Ichthus congregation in Kampen and the General Synod at Emmen, so that the English-speaking brothers and sisters can take cognizance of this. These letters were also published earlier in De Bazuin.

From the editor

Joh. Houweling

page 1

About the true ecumenism (1)

Rev. S. de Marie

page 3

About the true ecumenism (2)

Rev. S. de Marie

page 6

Letters General Synod Emmen and Kampen (Ichthus)

A. Admiraal, C.A. Teunis

page 9

Too early? Or was it too late?

Michiel Sneep

page 23

Reply to Velthuis (1)

A. van Egmond, L. Menninga

page 27

Reply to Velthuis (2)

A. van Egmond, L. Menninga

page 28

This issue is certainly useful also for the English-speaking deputies, so that they too can take cognizance of the situation concerning our churches in their own native tongue.

Thus far concerning the articles in this Magazine.

With all this we know that God Himself preserves His church to the end and it is His merit that the Church still exists.

Finally, we hope and pray that this issue also will be well-received and that eyes, world-wide, shall be opened to the right view on the Church, and that it may contribute to God's church-gathering work, to the honour of His holy Name.

Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk



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Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

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About the true ecumenism (1)

Answer to Rev. E. Hoogendoorn

Signs

Lately a lot has been written in the church bulletin De Bazuin about the church and the unity of the church. There is every reason for this. Not because there are many seekers due to the ecclesiastical developments in the Gkv (Reformed Church-liberated). But also because, in our time especially, the right insight on the church and church-gathering so easily can become clouded by subjective thoughts and feelings.

If we want to keep the right biblical insight on the church and also help others with that, then we ourselves will continually have to be stimulated by the Word of the Lord and the confession of the church.

Lately there are signs of (possible) separation of ministers from the Gkv. That gives hope.

Will it yet become reality, for which, for so long now, has been prayed, personally and publicly? And for which is still being prayed?

Yet the signs don't only seem encouraging and hopeful. For we do not (as yet) hear of conciliation to one of The Reformed Churches.

Rev. R. van der Wolf has unfortunately passed the churches and accepted a call to the Matrix-congregation. A congregation that was led out of the bond of churches. That can give disappointment and to some even confusion. Because the concerned brothers and sisters, and the ministers are dear to us, many of us wonder; how do we now assess what was said and done? How should we assess it in the light of God's Word? And how do we deal with it?

In this article we will respond to what Rev. Hoogendoorn spoke about at a meeting convened by the interdenominational study group "De Vijfhoek". His speech entitled: "About the true ecumenism" can be found on the site of this study group.

The voice of the Good Shepherd

Let us begin by expressing our gratitude, that in his speech, Rev. Hoogendoorn gives a Scriptural basis and line, when it comes to the church-gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nowadays it is a relief, when you hear and read that Scriptures are being faithfully repeated.

That there is an eye for the struggle to preserve the true ecumenism in comparison to the false ecumenism.

Rev. Hoogendoorn gives examples of this from early and recent church history.

There he describes that he does not want to follow in the striving for unscriptural unity at the expense of the truth. He sees it as estranging from the voice of the Shepherd (John 10), that scatters instead of gathers.

As main feature of the Christian Church he points to the "Sola Scriptura" (only the Holy Scripture). In the church therefore, heresy must always be resisted.

If the Word is at issue, reformation is necessary.

A number of times he refers to the brochure "About the true ecumenism", that was written by the deputies contact churches abroad, under the authority of GS Groningen-Zuid 1978 and signed by Rev. O.J. Douma and Rev. P. van Gurp.

In this brochure, the objections against becoming a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, are explained. We want to pass on one quotation from it here:

Whoever, in the name of, and with an appeal to the unity will continue to tolerate the propagator of heresy in the congregation, violates her unity with Christ. Similarly, whoever strives under the banner of ecumenical diligence to seek such a unity, seeks a unity that cannot exist before the Lord of His church. (p. 5).

For the true unity, it is also essential that what is experienced and maintained in practice, is what is confessed.

Sincere binding to the confession and maintaining the church discipline according to God's Word are necessary to protect the flock against heresy.

Rev. Hoogendoorn, at the same time, emphasises the importance of seeking the unity of all true believers as a holy calling, an assignment from the Lord Jesus Christ for His own. (John 17).

Therewith he quotes from the above mentioned brochure:

On the other hand, each must strive ecumenically for a common binding to the truth in Christ. He builds on the foundation of apostles and prophets of which Christ Himself is the cornerstone. (p. 6).

It is good to speak to and encourage each other on this basis.

Summary of the situation

Rev. Hoogendoorn, in the second half of his speech, comes to the concrete situation. Here he depicts the Gkv as a church community that is in continuing dissolution. The liberated past is abandoned. In many cases, the binding to Scripture and the confession is at issue. The heresy is being protected and criticism is put aside with all kinds of allaying statements. The church federation of the Gkv has become interdenominational through all kinds of connections with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (Netherlands Reformed Churches). All sorts of liberties of independentism crop up "in a frank disregard of the church-federation agreements, when it does not suit a minister or church council".

Besides the open Holy Supper celebration, he mentions more examples of estrangement from God's Word.

To this he finely connects the following observation:

He who loves the Word of the Lord and wants to see that the Reformed confession is really maintained, will, in the GKV, inevitably face the choice: either break with the iniquity or be co-responsible for the estrangement of the Word of God in the full breadth of church life.

If Rev. Hoogendoorn points to the first as inevitable in the current situation, he rightly calls: first point to the responsibility of the local church councils.

But then also:

If the choice is to follow Christ, or the church council, the answer from John 10 may be clear. The sheep will not follow a stranger, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. The sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. Not the herd is beatific, but the Shepherd! And if the herd breaks away from the shepherd, and that deformed church will not turn back, then you shall let go of her and hold on to the Shepherd.

We are happy with this consistent Scriptural appeal to follow the Lord Jesus wherever He goes.

Deformation and Reformation

Before we discuss the practical advice that Rev. Hoogendoorn gives, we will briefly go back to his summary. We had left something out, namely a piece of history, a brief outline of the developments in the Gkv. How did it come to such deformation?

And how had it already been warned in the past?

Then, in our opinion, something very remarkable occurs in the speech of Rev. Hoogendoorn. For he begins with 2004!

He refers to an article that he, together with 7 other ministers of the Gkv, had published at that time, on the website of www.gereformeerdblijven.nl, about worrisome developments that had crept in and were accepted and practised.

But 2004 is one year after the most recent liberation. Not a word about it is mentioned by him. Whilst whole congregations had already been confronted with it. Does Rev. Hoogendoorn do justice to the developments in the church? Developments in the area of deformation, and developments of reformation? Where was the visible start of the deformation, where were the roots of it? Was it not there, where, visible for everyone, the false ecumenism was embraced, heresy was admitted and thus the authority of the Scripture had to make way for it? We already see the beginning of it in the 1980's (1982 Nederlands Dagblad - interdenominational editors, 1985 Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond - 'Lijstineenschuiving' (combining of electoral lists)).

The adage "life is one", was being more widely renounced. The interdenominational idea became more and more accepted. First in the ecclesiastical organizations, and later in the church federation itself. Only a few years after the by Rev. Hoogendoorn mentioned brochure of 1978, a small beginning of a smouldering fire developed, which steadily expanded further and further, destroying the foundation of the church. That became officially visible in the synod decisions in the nineties, beginning with G.S. Ommen 1993. Since then, there was an ecclesiastical switch towards the false ecumenism and the undermining of the authority of Scripture.

Now that we, out of sheer necessity, are being forced to reconsider the decisions of the period 1993-2002, it has become clear in many areas. (see Acts G.S. Mariënberg 2005, and Acts Zwolle 2007). This proves that we all are guilty of it coming so far in the Gkv. That should make us humble and small before the Lord, the King of the church.

But there are not only developments of deformation to point to, but also, thanks be to

God, developments of reformation. Since 1993 a lot of notices of objections were tabled against unscriptural decisions. The vast majority of them have been rejected.

Since 1991, articles in the journal *Reformanda* have warned against the wrong developments. Not only at synod level, but also in the broader church life. We are not going to explain that here again, but for that, we refer to recent articles in *De Bazuin* of 25th March and 1st April 2009 (vol. 3, no's. 11 and 12).

These did not concern trivial matters, or small issues. No, the Word of God, the confession of the church and the Church Order founded on God's Word were at stake. The 4th commandment (Sunday rest), 7th commandment (marriage and divorce), Scripture criticism (in the Gkv and in contacts with other churches), false ecumenism, an open Holy Supper table, church hymns packed with heresy, human-centred organization of church services, erosion of the offices and independentism in reference to the Church Order.

Information about all this, was given in the way of meetings, brochures and via church bulletins.

But in the churches, to our sorrow, these signals were continuously hushed up and ignored.

After the rejection of many second appeals and other notices of appeal regarding several unscriptural synod decisions by GS Zuidhorn in 2003, it had to be concluded that the ecclesiastical path was completely closed, because two, and in some cases even three consecutive synods had rejected the appeals and therefore, according to ecclesiastical law, there is no possibility for further appeals. They appeared not to want to listen to an appeal to God's Word. Not a single sign could be detected of a return from the road of widespread adulteration and apostasy of the church.

That is why, after many years of warnings and appeals, there was a church-wide call for internal reformation. The motivation for this call was explained in the brochure *Laten wij ons bekeren; een oproep tot reformatie* (Let us repent; a call to reformation) LWVKO 2003.

In this brochure, the church members were called up to request their church council, with arguments based on Gods Word, not to ratify the decisions that had been made.

When this call, too, was massively rejected, - but not before that, - the first liberations took place. At the

same time a public meeting was held for all church members. It was the liberation meeting of 20th September 2003 in Zwolle. It was comprehensively explained and argued that it was definitely not too early, but high time for Liberation. Namely: to remain Church!

Why then?

We don't mention all this because we consider ourselves to be so fantastic, personally or as a church. There is no reason for us to feel better than others who came to the believing realization (much) later, that the foundation of the Gkv is affected, because the untruth has received a permanent and increasingly dominant place next to the truth.

We mention the above, because we are grateful to the Lord for His grace, that He had opened our eyes. Whereby He kept us by His Word against error and apostasy. Thus we may gratefully acknowledge, that it was He who, through the recent liberation, continued to lead His church. We heartily see this then as Gods work with us. In this way we want to see it as His work, when even now, brothers and sisters become convinced through the Scripture, that they have to break with a faithless and apostate church federation. Also now, when they hear the voice of the good Shepherd and want to follow Him. It is out of this gratitude, why it hurts that Rev. Hoogendoorn remained silent about this (pre-)history of the churches in his speech.

But it is not so much our pain. We consider it particularly unreasonable in relation to the church-gathering work of the Lord. If we want to find one another with all our heart, in true ecumenism, let us then do justice to the work of the Lord. We ourselves are weak. There is no reason to boast of our work. But we may - even despite all our sorrows surrounding a liberation- thankfully acknowledge the way of grace along which the Lord calls his own and continues to call.

That is why we must not conceal this history.

We wonder what the reason is and ask Rev. Hoogendoorn: Why then?

In the following article we would like to go further into the advice that Rev. Hoogendoorn has given to the concerned members in the GKv, and who are being called by him to liberate themselves.

S. de Marie

About the true ecumenism (2)

Answer to Rev. E. Hoogendoorn

We continue our response on the speech of Rev. Hoogendoorn.

The last time we noted, with pleasure, the recognition of the biblical message, regarding the Lord's request for church unity. On the one hand there is the true ecumenism as opposed to the false ecumenism, where God's Word is not safe and where God's children therefore are not safe.

On the other hand there is always the command of the Lord Himself to seek the unity with all God's children in true faith. Further, we are pleased with the consequence that Rev. Hoogendoorn draws, on basis of the message from Scripture and Confession from the current situation in the Gkv: to break with the iniquity. We did point out his ignoring the developments that led to the liberation of 2003.

We wondered: why then?

The advice of Rev. Hoogendoorn

If Rev. Hoogendoorn now comes to a concrete advice to the liberating brothers and sisters, he first looks to the left and to the right of the Gkv. He is looking for alternatives. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (Christian Reformed Church) or the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (Reformed State Church-restored). He sees recognition, even points to a common foundation.

Yet, in both denominations, he sees problems and barriers to join one of them. Although he does not specifically name it, we can assume that Art.29 of the Belgic Confession is taken as guide, because arguments are mentioned that concern the Word of God.

Rev. Hoogendoorn uses the term "brotherhood" for these churches and even for the Gereformeerde Gemeente (a reformed church that has its roots in the Reformed State Church). The latter puzzles us. Is there then, *besides* 'true ecumenism' also a '(true) brotherhood-bond' between the churches? Does this not include the thought of "de gereformeerde gezindte" (all the reformed denominations)? Or do I read this incorrectly?

Then he turns to DGK(r):

Last but not least I mention DGK(r). The many concerns about the developments of the Gkv that

we shared with DGK(r), and still share, reveal a common basis. They drive us towards each other. It is not so long ago that we celebrated the Holy Supper together. We also share a rich common history. DGK(r) left ahead of us in the parting of ways with the Gkv. It is common knowledge that for many brothers and sisters, who also had their concerns about the Gkv, it was too early to take that step. We still saw the space and the duty within the Gkv, to appeal to the brotherhood. Also, the arguments that DGK(r) brought forward at the time, had too narrow a basis for us to say: to stay longer in the Gkv is irresponsible before the Lord.

Humility?

It is sad that Rev. Hoogendoorn wants to put it in this way. Rev. Hoogendoorn, in all honesty, wants to mention his concerns that could form a barrier. He believes that openness can be of service to each other.

We greatly appreciate this attitude. This allows us to be frank in giving an open and honest answer to what he mentions is a barrier for unity with us. Wouldn't it be better if Rev. Hoogendoorn links his judgement about the 'too early' and 'too narrow' about the liberation of 2003 and subsequent years, to the consideration about whether that step of his and of others could now be 'very late', in the eyes of the Lord? One must also consider how many church members, after a deformation process of more than 15 years, in the mean time, have been poisoned by the heresy of false ecumenism and by the undermining of the authority of Scripture in the Gkv. How many families have not been torn apart by this? This is one of the most widespread reasons of constant and deep grief in DGK(r). However much hasn't the concern in the Gkv crumbled away by further adjustments over the past years? But above all, we must all remember this: How much hasn't the Lord been wronged in His honour and in His right!? As for the 'too narrow': is the basis on which Rev. Hoogendoorn now calls up for liberation, substantially broader than the call to reformation in 2003? In addition, he himself, at that time, in the undivided church council of Kampen-North, consented to the ratification of unscriptural synod decisions of Zuidhorn 2002/2003.

No, we all are to blame for the deforming developments that has been going on for so many years.

We *did* not and *do* not *become* co-responsible for this, as Rev. Hoogendoorn puts it.

But we *were* or *are* responsible for it. In this we don't consider ourselves better than the other.

Here it is fitting for us to show sincere humiliation to the Lord. But let us then also show that humiliation by not judging each other. That does not fall to us. According to me, this is reciprocal.

Radicalism

Rev. Hoogendoorn's concern however, extends deeper than only (at the time) a 'too early' and 'too narrow'. He puts forward the question:

whether this also can testify of a radicalism that has shortcomings for the breadth of the foundation of the reformed churches: Gods Word and that only (think of what we confess in the three forms of unity!)?

Rev. Hoogendoorn suggests something very serious here: radicalism by detracting from Gods Word. It is said in the form of a question, without argumentation but with a heavily charged suggestion. In this way you put a church federation in the corner of extremism, that detracts from Gods Word and adds to it. This observed radicalism reaches into the foundation of the church and is in conflict with the three forms of unity.

This is a serious matter. What are his arguments for this? We do not read of them. It is not the first time that Rev. Hoogendoorn speaks about DGK (r) in this manner.

In this report about the true ecumenism, again, no reason for this suggestion is mentioned.

"Radicalism that is remiss in the breadth of the foundation of the reformed churches".

Radicalism in which the basis for true ecumenism is lacking. Radicalism by which the foundation of the church is broken up. A radicalism that is not equal to the radicalness of the faith that the Lord asks of us. No, demands are requested, that rise above God's Word, according Rev. Hoogendoorn.

Can this be said for any reason at all? Is this allowed? 'Open and honest', as is said in the reading on internet, in the RD (Reformatorisch Dagblad) report? This again gives grief. Yes it is open, but is it honest?

If you, with all your concerns, openly and sincerely seek each other, then you don't begin with such qualifications without arguments. Then you first question the other; or you place before the other, the observed shortcomings or errors, in the light of God's Word. So that the other can repent from it. But also to give him the opportunity to respond to it, on God's Word. On which you, if necessary, may have to adjust your own objections. Isn't it in this way, that we should seek each other? Isn't that the open and honest way that the Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd indicates in these matters?

Think of Math.18. Isn't this then the point when it comes to seeking the true ecumenism? This was the way it was meant and compiled in the by Rev. Hoogendoorn mentioned paper "about the true ecumenism" of 1980, that was commissioned by GS Groningen-Zuid: to warn and to call back, with arguments from God's Word and the Confession of the church.

It was the same with the paper commissioned by GS Arnhem 1981 directed toward the Christian Reformed Churches "*Het Woord laten staan; een oproep tot keuze*" (Let the Word stand; a call to make a choice): probing, but with arguments. The same was aimed for in the brochure "*Laten wij ons! bekeren*" (Let us! repent") of 2003.

Knowing one is safe

We don't want to go any further into the possible meanings and contents of all sorts of contradictions. We do want to point out that the true church shall never be perfect. That there too, will always be divisions, so it will be evident who can stand up to the test (1 Cor. 11:19).

It is also good to emphasize that we should not judge the church by the people, who, on the grounds of all kinds of contradictions, are dissatisfied. We must judge the church on its foundation, and the marks of the true church. Then the true church will also always be a militant church.

Militant, not only externally but also internally. Such a militant church shall not always appear attractive to others. There certainly will be talk of unholy fire. But if this church wants to stay by Gods Word, then the church may know it is safe, because of the guidance of the Lord and Saviour. That too was the reason why Calvin knew himself safe in the Geneva of his days. And why the GKv, in

the sixties, knew themselves safe in the time when the independentism came up.

So we also, as members of DGK(r), may know ourselves to be safe, now that independentism has again become active. Anyone then, who wants to join the church, may know themselves safe, because the Lord himself gives safety.

Not in all peace, that we as human beings would wish for, but in the peace that the Lord will give us through His Word and Spirit. The struggle will also continue in the church, because the judgement begins in the church. (1 Peter 4: 17)

How to proceed?

When we draw up the balance, then we can say the following: We are pleased with the Scriptural message Rev. Hoogendoorn has passed on in his lecture. We have made some marginal notes with regard to the effects towards certain church denominations. Also we did not understand why the history of deformation and reformation within the Gkv was not honestly mentioned.

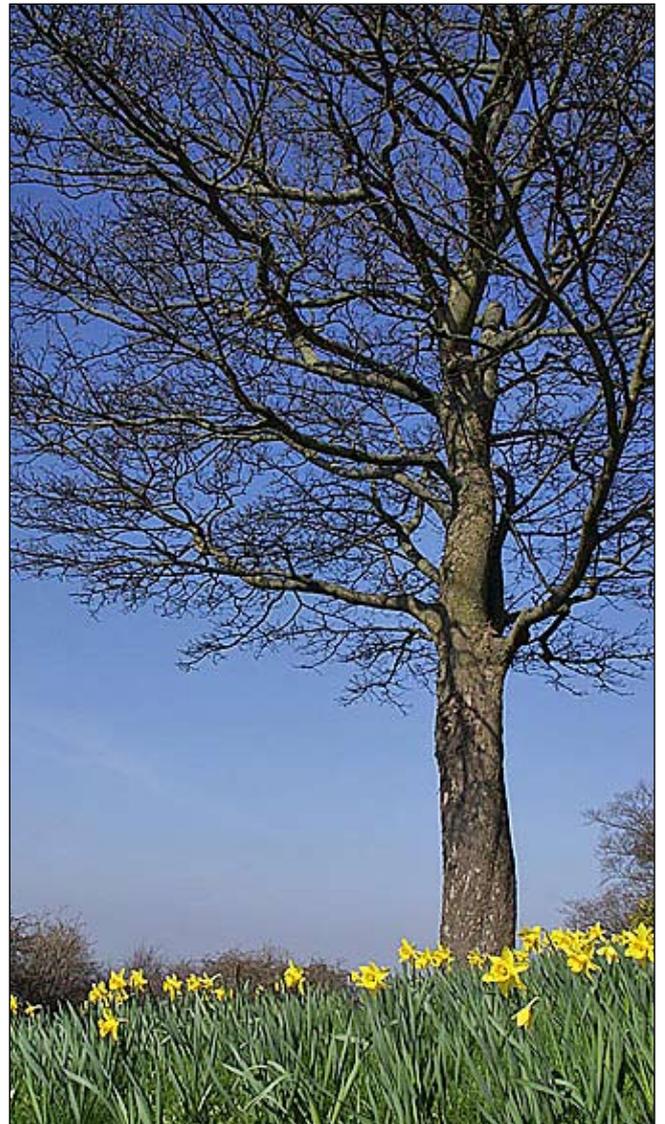
Nevertheless we are thankful that Rev. Hoogendoorn recognizes that he and why he has to break with the iniquity of the Gkv. And in addition calls up to concerned brothers and sisters to follow him. We are also pleased that he expresses himself in that there is a lot that binds him and his congregation with DGK(r). and that he intends to be open and honest. Even in his own concerns and the barrier that he experiences.

What he subsequently declared about the barrier that lies between us in an attempt to conciliation and unification, hurts and gives grief because of the public and non-argued accusations of radicalism that will affect the foundation of the church. We want to mention to him the Scriptural path in this. However we also note that Rev. Hoogendoorn, after his serious pronouncement towards DGK(r), indicates the possibility that concerns could be taken away after an honest discussion: *Who knows, that what worries us at this moment, can, in the future, be taken away with God's help.*

The very invocation of Gods help - and we assume that this is sincere - must give the basis, to not only a good discussion, but to actually seek and find each other in the unity of true faith. Honesty in this also means that we will want to abandon all prejudice.

We want to finish, then, with a call towards Rev. Hoogendoorn, the Ichthus congregation of Kampen-North and all the concerned brothers and sisters, in following the vocation of the Lord, to unite with the brothers and sisters who preceded them in the liberation and the continuation of the church of Jesus Christ in the Netherlands. We may confess in all humility, profess that DGK(r) shows marks of the true church. Therefore we may and must call to them in all frankness, in accordance with Article 28, Belgic Confession, to join the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, in this, we may also, with them, expect the blessing of the Lord.

S. de Marie



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Letters General Synod Emmen and Kampen (Ichthus)

Introduction

This year there have been a total of five letters written between GS Emmen and the Council of the Reformed Church at Kampen (Ichthus).

The General Synod published three letters in the 28th July issue, nr. 27, of 'De Bazuin'.

In this article we give, in short, an indication of the already published letters and a short introduction to the last two letters.

The first three letters

The following is a brief outline of the three already published letters.

1. The first letter dd 1st April 2010, is from the Commissie Kerkelijke Eenheid (Committee Ecclesiastical Unity - CKE, a committee set up by the Synod), and directed to the Council of the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) Kampen (Ichthus).

This letter was an invitation for a discussion about ecclesiastical unity, in which also the hope was expressed that our request, to enter into discussion with Kampen (Ichthus), could be explained further.

2. The second letter dd 24th May 2010, is from the church council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus) and is directed to the Committee Ecclesiastical Unity of the General Synod.

In this answering letter, the church council expresses that it is thankful that the synod sees the calling for unity, as our Reformed Confessions profess, and that seeking ecclesiastical unity is a matter of the church federation. The church council next indicates that it is not the right assembly for such a discussion. The church council asks to direct the request for a discussion on ecclesiastical unity to the 'Temporary Federation of the Reformed Churches'.

3. The third letter dd 21st June 2010, is from the General Synod and directed to the Council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus).

In this letter the synod gives an answer to the letter of 24th May 2010. Here the synod writes that it shall not enter into discussion on ecclesiastical unity with the 'Temporary Church Federation of the Reformed Churches'. The motives for this decision are written in the letter.

One of the motives is that the Temporary Federation has been formed, also by congregations that have broken away from DGK (The Reformed Churches restored). That applies to the congregation of Hardenberg that is under the leadership, also of lawfully suspended and dismissed office-bearers. The synod cannot by-pass the judgments of the own minor ecclesiastical assemblies where it concerns office-bearers in the Temporary Federation. It is also noted that the church council of the congregation of Hardenberg did not appeal in a proper notice of objection to the General Synod. The synod concludes from this that the congregation of Hardenberg ignores the Federation of DGK.

The synod further points to the congregation of Zwijndrecht. This congregation gave as answer to an appeal by General Synod Emmen that first the decisions from the past must be retracted. In this the synod sees a persevering rejection of the Church Federation of DGK.

In its letter, the synod also gave as motive, that the congregation of Zwolle - Vijverhoeve has, in the meantime, joined the temporary church federation. This is a congregation that schismatically and without following the ecclesiastical path, tore itself away from DGK.

It has shocked the synod that, in the published press release, it was made known that this accession to this temporary church federation is seen as an undeserved blessing of the exalted Saviour Jesus Christ. This standpoint means that the schism in DGK Zwolle is seen by the temporary church Federation as a schism that was commanded by the King of the church. This is an open/publicly unheard judgment of the federation of DGK.

The last two letters

4. The fourth letter of 23rd July 2010 is from the Council of the Reformed Church (Ichthus) and directed to the synod of DGK.

This letter is an answer to the letter from the General Synod, dd 21st June 2010.

In its letter, the church council of Kampen (Ichthus) gives an account of the facts such as they are, according to this church council.

In this account, the letter mentions a discussion by phone with our deputies Internal Relations where an agreement was apparently made that the church council would wait. It was also indicated that the

synod gave an incorrect account of the talk that our deputies had with the ministers Hoogendoorn and Van der Wolf. The letter asks for a rectification of the letter of 21st June.

In connection with a discussion at church federation level, the church council writes that, among other things, it does not have a need to go further into that what the synod has written regarding the congregations of Hardenberg, Zwijndrecht and Zwolle, the current sister-churches of Kampen (Ichthus). The church council also states that it is aware of our viewpoint. The letter ends with an appeal to the General Synod.

5. The fifth letter of 16th October 2010 is from the General Synod and is directed to the Council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus), This letter is an answer to the letter from Kampen (Ichthus) of 23rd July 2010.

In this letter the synod explains in detail, all the points in the letter of 23rd July. Mention is also made of the fact that Rev. Hoogendoorn writes about DGK-synod on his own website.

In this answer the synod also gives an oversight of the mutual contacts. That happened, among other things, because it subsequently appeared that a difference of insight had developed regarding the course of the contacts, also because Kampen (Ichthus), in its letter, refers to a telephone conversation. Our deputies ACOBB know nothing of this conversation.

At the end of the letter, the synod asks the church council to recall its wrongful judgment. This judgment saddens the synod. Added to that is the question to, as yet, enter into discussion with the synod, separate from the Temporary Federation.

The General Synod has, in its meetings, decided to also publish the two last (above mentioned) letters. These last two letters will be published unabridged in this issue of 'De Bazuin', (no. 45, 15th December 2010).

*A. Admiraal and C.A. Teunis,
at the time, chairman and assessor
of the General Synod at Emmen*

Committee Ecclesiastical Unity of The Reformed Churches (restored) in the Netherlands (DGK)
c/o G.H.Plaggemars, secretary.
Hesselinkkamp 11
7692 AS Mariënberg

To: The Council of the Reformed Church - Kampen (Ichthus).
c/o J.A. de Wit
Rietkamp 5
8266 KE Kampen

Concerning: Request discussion with a view to Ecclesiastical unity

Mariënberg, 1 April 2010

Esteemed brothers,

The General Synod of the DGK, in their meeting of the 19th of March 2010, discussed the seeking of ecclesiastical unity with those who, in truth, love Jesus Christ and serve Him. For this seeking of ecclesiastical unity is, after all, a mandate of Christ, the Lord of His church, (Belgic Confession art. 27 - 29) and concerns all believers.

During this discussion, the report of our Deputies Internal Relations (Deputaten Binnenlandse Betrekkingen), which contained a report of the discussion with your minister in the presence of Rev. van der Wolf, was also discussed.

With reference to this report, and as sequel to it, the synod requests you to hold a discussion with DGK

shortly. The aim of the discussion is to investigate if we may come to ecclesiastical unity.

The synod has, also for this discussion, appointed a Committee Ecclesiastical Unity (Commissie Kerkelijke Eenheid). This committee also has an advisory task in assisting the churches within the federation, and to support activities that are associated with achieving an ecclesiastical unity with all those who in truth, love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would consent to entering into this discussion with us. We would suggest to have this on Saturday 29th of May or 5th of June 2010.

We can understand that you may be somewhat surprised by our request towards you, as you have, in the meantime, started a temporary ecclesiastical federation with the congregations of Bergentheim/Bruchterveld and Zwijndrecht. During our discussion with you, we hope to clarify our request.

Based on the Word of Christ, as professed in the Reformed Confession, we hope and pray that you see the necessity to, together with us, deliberate about the ecclesiastical unity in Christ. So that, under the blessing of our faithful God and Father in heaven, our separated ways may now become a forming of one flock under the great Shepherd of the sheep.

We pray that you may receive the strength and wisdom from the Lord with all your considerations, and trustfully await your reaction.

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the Committee Ecclesiastical Unity of DGK (The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored)),

G.H.Plaggenmars

To: the Committee Ecclesiastical Unity of DGK
c/o G.H. Plaggenmars, secretary.

Concerning: your request for a discussion, dd 1st April 2010

Kampen, 24th May 2010

Esteemed brothers,

The church council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus) has received and discussed your letter of 1st April 2010.

In your letter you ask us to hold a discussion with you with the aim to investigate if we may come to ecclesiastical unity.

It makes us thankful that you see the calling to unity as our Reformed Confession professes, for all who love the Lord according to His Word. We heartily share these feelings.

In your position as Committee Ecclesiastical Unity of DGK (The Reformed Churches - restored) on behalf of your Ecclesiastical Federation, you invite us to hold a discussion. You are aware, as you also mention

in your letter, that we as congregation of Kampen, are part of a federation.

According to the church council, the seeking of ecclesiastical unity is indeed a matter of the ecclesiastical federation, as you likewise ask for this discussion from your own federation.

Therefore it seems natural to us that this discussion is not to be held with a local church, one single church of a federation, but with the federation itself of which we are a part.

Thus we are not the appointed assembly with which to hold that discussion concerning the ecclesiastical unity.

Therefore we ask you to direct your request to the "Temporary Ecclesiastical federation of the Reformed Churches".

The address of the federation is: J.A. de Wit, Rietkamp 5, 8266 KE Kampen. (Secretary of the contact-church).

We pray that the Lord will give you and us clearness and wisdom in these matters, and show us the path we are to follow, in faithfulness to the Great Shepherd of the sheep, to do what He asks of us in the search for unity with all those who, in all their doings wish to stand on the Scriptural foundation, the Reformed Confession and the Reformed Church Order.

With brotherly greetings,

on behalf of the church council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus)

J.A. de Wit

To: The Council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus)
c/o J.A.de Wit, secretary,
Rietkamp 5
8266 KE Kampen

From: The General Synod of the Reformed Churches - restored(DGK)
c/o C.Baan
Zalderdijk 47
8042 PP Zwolle

Concerning: Answer to your letter of the 24th May 2010.

Date: Emmen 21st June 2010

Esteemed brothers,

Introduction

The Committee Ecclesiastical Unity (Commissie Kerkelijke Eenheid, henceforth CKE), reported to us on the 12th June 2010 about her recent correspondence with you. The CKE also came with your request, to direct the matter of holding a discussion with your council to the temporary ecclesiastical federation, as the matter lays outside her mandate.

In its (CKE) letter of 1st April 2010 in which you were invited for a discussion with a view in to ecclesiastical unity, the CKE wrote that it wished to clarify its request during the discussion. In it, they referred to the subject of your Temporary Federation. We find it disappointing that you have not offered the CKE this opportunity. This verbal explanation, namely, all had to do with the impossibility for us to hold a discussion with a view to ecclesiastical unity with the Temporary Federation.

During the meeting on the 12th of June 2010 we discussed your request and decided not to comply with it. For the record, we point out here that we also have decided to publish our correspondence in our national church magazine, De Bazuin, 4 weeks after the date of this letter.

To give you clarity about the reason for this, we will justify ourselves via this letter, as verbal explanation has not proved possible.

We have divided this justification into a number of points.

1. The Temporary Federation of the church is formed by congregations that have segregated themselves from The Reformed Churches (restored).

1.1. The congregation of Hardenberg.

The congregation in your Ecclesiastical Federation that meets in Hardenberg is partly under leadership of lawfully suspended and dismissed office-bearers, who ignore ecclesiastical pronouncements. At this moment, this has become more clear because, despite repeated insistence from our side, this church council did not appeal to the general synod via a valid notice of objection. In this situation we cannot and may not provide a mandate to hold discussions with the Temporary ecclesiastical federation, for then we would be bypassing the judgment of minor assemblies with regard to office-bearers within your federation. Here, a calling to repentance and returning from the taken path, would be more appropriate. In this attitude of the congregation of Hardenberg, we see an ignoring of the ecclesiastical federation of The Reformed Churches (restored) (DGK).

1.2 The congregation of Zwijndrecht.

The congregation of Zwijndrecht, at the same time, actively withdrew itself from the ecclesiastical federation, without following the ecclesiastical path. Besides that, in a recent appeal from our side toward this congregation in a letter of 7th May 2010, an answer was given that the possibility of discussion with her, can only occur if firstly, the decisions taken in the past regarding Zwijndrecht, are withdrawn. However, we cannot and may not comply with this, as such reviewing of lawfully made decisions have not come up for discussion via the agreed-upon ecclesiastical path.

In this attitude of the congregation of Zwijndrecht, we see a persistent rejection of the ecclesiastical federation of DGK.

2. Our earlier request for holding a discussion, also at your minister's request, has not been answered. At Synod on the 19th of March 2010 the Deputies (Binnenlandse Betrekkingen (ACOB) Internal Relations) reported on the discussion that was held with your minister on Monday the 23rd of November 2009. From that it has become clear to us that your minister found it more advisable to have a follow-up discussion with the church council of the Reformed Church Kampen (Ichthus). Also based on this advice, and the initially shown benevolence, the letter from the CKE with the request for a discussion came into being. As church council of Kampen (Ichthus), you had therefore already received, as continuation of the first discussion with the deputies Internal Relations with your minister, an invitation, dated 9th January 2010. A letter was also sent to your minister the 9th January 2010 with the confirmation of the discussion that was held between him and the deputies Internal Relations, and the request for a follow-up discussion with his church council.

It surprises us greatly that you, even after contact by phone, and the urging from the side of the deputies Internal Relations, for months did not respond to the invitation, from initially the deputies and later from the CKE, to come to the desired discussion. We experienced this as very disappointing, especially considering your publicly declared willingness to seek the unity with all who want to stand on the grounds of Scripture and Confession.

3. Three days before the forming of the Temporary Ecclesiastical Federation this forming was denied.

In the discussion with your minister on Monday the 23rd November 2009, the deputies Internal Relations inquired about the forming of a possible ecclesiastical federation between different congregations that do not belong to the Ecclesiastical Federation of DGK. The deputies have not been able to interpret the minister's reaction to this in any other way, than that this forming of a church federation was not a prospect. However, a few days after this discussion, it was made known via a press-report that, on the 26th November 2009, your congregation started up a temporary federation with congregations that formally belonged to our church federation. You will understand that this press-report surprised the deputies Internal Relations and also us greatly, and that therefore there was a necessity to discuss this matter with you and your minister.

The congregations of Zwolle and Hardenberg originated because the brothers and sisters concerned, actively and without an appeal to Art.31 C.O. placed themselves outside the federation of DGK.

4. The congregation of Zwolle, 'De Vijverhoeve', has entered the Temporary Federation. Meanwhile a new reason has arisen as to why we shall not go into discussion with a view to ecclesiastical unity with the temporary federation. The reason is the admission to the temporary federation of the congregation that meets in the Vijverhoeve. That congregation is schismatic and without having followed the ecclesiastical path, has broken with DGK. Also here Art. 31 CO is being totally ignored. This admittance to your temporary Eccl. Federation has namely shocked us by what you have written about this in your press-report of 5th June 2010. In this report we read the sentence: "in this received unity, the churches see the undeserved benefit of the exalted Saviour Jesus Christ, Who brings together what belongs together".

We are perplexed at what you make public here and that what is further indicated in it. For by stating that the unity received with the congregation that meets in De Vijverhoeve, as being an undeserved benefit from the exalted Saviour who brings together what belongs together, you publicly assert that the break made earlier with DGK of Zwolle e.o., by these brothers and sisters, was an authorized break, according to the Scripture. As a break commanded by the King of the Church.

In all seriousness we ask ourselves how you have been able to take the responsibility for this, without first having spoken to us. Is this not a publicly unheard-of condemning of the Ecclesiastical Federation of DGK whilst we indeed, from the beginning, offered the possibility to enquire of each other in mutual discussions together? But how very different it was from your side. You did as though you wanted to go into discussion with all those who want to stand on the foundation of Scripture and Confession, but until today, we have noticed little or nothing regarding this. The cause could possibly be that you think we do not or do not want to stand on that foundation. But would it then not have been more genuine if you had made that clear to us in a discussion? And in it, pointed out to us, where we wrong the foundation once laid by the apostles and prophets?

This oppresses even more, because your minister did publicly state, for instance, in his speech "concerning the true ecumenism", that, in his opinion, there are sufficient matters to firstly genuinely examine and discuss how it comes about that there is so much disunity within GKH/DGK.

Apparently this "genuine examining and discussing" of the disunity observed by your ministers, is restricted to speaking with those who left DGK.

Desire

It is our hearty conviction that the speaking of ecumenical desires is not allowed be at odds with the active deeds, if our speaking is to be righteous and pure before the Lord and toward each other. Therefore we, to a great extent, deplore that the speaking of your minister about ecumenical desire, up until today, was not coupled to the ecumenical deeds from your side towards DGK.

It is our sincere desire and prayer to the Lord that He opens the ways by which all who want to serve and follow Him in righteousness, may be gathered.

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the General Synod of DGK,

Chairman, A. Admiraal
Second Clerk, C. Baan

To the Synod of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Emmen 2009-2010)
c/o.C.Baan, second secretary
Zalkerdijk 47
8042 PP Zwolle.

Concerning: your letter of the 21st June 2010.

Kampen, 23rd July 2010

Esteemed Brothers,

Our council has discussed your writing of 21st June 2010 that your synod sent to us as answer to our letter of 24th May 2010 to your Committee Ecclesiastical Unity. We took note of it with disappointment. For more than one reason.

The actual course of the contacts.

Firstly we mention *your account of the course of the contacts*.

In your writing you state: "It surprises us greatly that you, even after phone contact and the urging from the side of deputies Internal Relations (Binnenlandse Betrekkingen), for months did not respond to the invitation from, initially, the deputies, and later from the Committee Ecclesiastical Unity, to come to the desired discussion."

We have taken note of this assertion with surprise.

For what was the real course of events?

Firstly, on request of your Deputies Internal Relations, a discussion was held with our minister personally, concerning his talk in Sept 2009 on: "about the true ecumenicity". This discussion took place on 23rd Nov. 2009 in the presence of Rev. R. van der Wolf. It was considered advisable, from both sides, that a possible follow-up discussion would not take place at personal level, but between deputies and the council of the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) Kampen (Ichthus). That was personally confirmed by phone after consultation with the church council. The church council would wait, as deputies first had to submit it to your synod. Your deputies ACOBB also confirmed this again in writing to our minister, 9th Jan 2010. There they wrote: "We hope that our churches give us a new mandate to speak with you further about the questions you have presented. We think that the following discussion will not be with

you personally, but with your church council or a delegation of your church council. You had already indicated that in the discussion on the 23rd November 2009. In connection with this we will shortly direct a request to your church council.”

The church council was informed of these matters. In your official church magazine DE BAZUIN of 17th March 2010 we could take note of the discussions of (among other things) this work of your deputies at the synod sitting of 27th Feb 2010. In this report, the bickering at your synod about the manner of operation by your deputies in their making contact with our minister and church council came across to us as shameful.

Finally your synod (on 19th March 2010) came to a decision. In a writing of 1st April 2010 the synod (via committee Ecclesiastical Unity) requests our council “to hold a discussion with DGK shortly. The aim of this discussion, is to investigate if we may come to ecclesiastical unity”.

This is the first and only official request from your side to our council to come to a discussion. The church council had to wait for this request, as was indicated by your deputies.

In the course of the month of April this request was received by our council. Our church council normally meets once every 3 weeks.

Your request has been discussed by our church council at the first possible opportunity that was available. Because of an over-full agenda, it had to be carried over a few church council meetings. So the church council made a decision in May and informed you by letter on 24th May.

Brothers, can you somewhat imagine, that we, seeing the true course of events, therefore think it is a suggestive, and in more than one aspect, an unjust account when you reproach our church council: “*that for months* you did not respond to the invitations, initially from the *deputies*, and later from the Committee Ecclesiastical Unity?” (The italics and underlining is ours).

Here the facts speak for themselves.

Unjust account of the discussion.

We consider *your account of part of the discussion that your deputies ACOBB had with our minister and Rev. van der Wolf* as a second example of detrimentally suggestive image-forming. Our minister was supposed to have deceived you with reference to the forming of an ecclesiastical federation by our church council with other congregations. You make it appear as though our minister, in his response to questions from your deputies, on that subject, gave the impression that this forming of federation was not in the offing. Whilst you, a few days after this discussion, were able to state via a press report, that the forming of this federation was already started up 3 days after the discussion.

Brothers, you suggest unfairness, whilst the facts are different. Colleague van der Wolf, who was present at that conversation, is likewise witness of your unjust opinion. In that discussion the ministers did not go into the question concerning such an ecclesiastical federation (and the vowing to your deputies not to make the move to do so). They thought it unnecessary to go into it at that moment and in that discussion.

That is very different than your offensive accusation, even in the heavy-printed title in your letter: “Three days before the formation of the temporary ecclesiastical federation, this moving towards such a formation was denied”.

Request for rectification.

We request that the above mentioned and refuted allegations, (you were even of the opinion that you had to publish them) are corrected and publicly rectified by you.

Discussions at federation level suggested and refused.

By the time the request from your synod to hold a discussion with our church council was dealt with at our church council, the ecclesiastical developments, had by that time, progressed, in your federation of churches as well as in ours.

That was the cause for our church council to raise the ecclesiastical discussion, that was initially thought to be at church council level, to the ecclesiastical federation level, from ecclesiastical federation to ecclesiastical federation.

Therefore our reaction to your invitation, not to hold a discussion with only the church council to examine if we may come to church unity, but seeing we are part of, in the meantime, a further grown federation, was to hold the discussion between the ecclesiastical federations.

You indicated, in a discussion with our church council, that you wish to explain why you still desired to hold a discussion with us only.

In the meantime you have given that explanation in your response of 21st June last.

The church council has no desire to respond to what you assert, regarding our present sister -churches of Hardenberg, of Zwijndrecht as also of Zwolle (Vijverhoeve).

That also counts for the reproaches you direct towards us concerning these churches, as though we would not have heard both sides and therewith condemned DGK without hearing its side.

Brothers, in your official church magazine DE BAZUIN, as also at your synods, you have said and published more than enough, to know your detailed, well-considered standpoint in these matters.

Also concerning the congregation of Zwolle (Vijverhoeve), the justification from your church council towards the congregation is known.

Surely we don't have to know more than your own church federation have received, in justification from your side about the matters concerned?

We therefore leave everything you claim regarding our mentioned sister-churches completely for your own responsibility, and are deeply concerned about your continued attitude in this.

Appeal

Sorrowfully we have to establish that there is an enormous contradiction in your speaking about the "true ecumenism according to Scripture and confession" and your acting in your ecclesiastical practice. Unfortunately we see it working schismatically inwardly as well as outwardly.

It is our prayer that the Lord may open your eyes for this. For the blessing of the congregation that you lead and represent. And for restoration of the unity of the dispersed sheep of our Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

With brotherly greeting,

On behalf of the above-mentioned council,

J.A.de Wit,
Secretary

Emmen, 16th October 2010

To the Council of the Gereformeerde Kerk Kampen (Ichthus)
c/o J.A. de Wit, Secretary
Rietkamp 5
8266 KE Kampen

Concerning: Reaction to your letter of 23rd July 2010

Esteemed brothers,

With reference to your letter of 23rd July 2010 which includes an appeal to us, because there is, according to you, an enormous contradiction between our speaking of the "true ecumenism according to Scripture and confession", and our acting in the ecclesiastical practice, we have critically examined our own actions toward you.

This also with reference to what your minister wrote as accompanying comment with your letter on your website, namely: *"It is sad that the DGK-synod wants to prove itself in this way, and to justify its way of ecclesiastical acting. In our view it will render no service to the true ecumenism, as we expressed in our letter. I hope it will become clear to you all from following written response."*

With your appeal to us and the accompanying comment from your minister, you, after all, reproach us, that we do say that we want to seek the true ecumenism, but in practice we do not act accordingly. That is serious, and your reproach affects us deeply. There should be no misunderstanding or unclearness about these matters amongst us. Therefore the following, as reaction to your writing.

1. The course of the contacts.

It firstly strikes us that in this section you do quote from the letter dated 9th Jan 2010 from our deputies to your minister, but not from the letter of the same date from our deputies to you as church council. This is the more striking because in our letter dated 21st June 2010 to you, we had emphatically referred you to this letter and mentioned that it was an inviting letter.

We shall first explain why we call it a inviting letter.

This letter referred to the brotherly discussion that was had with your minister on the 23rd Nov. 2009. This discussion, moreover, took place on the initiative of our deputies. We make note of this because of your reproach that we do speak of seeking the true ecumenism, but do not act accordingly.

In this discussion the deputies were asked some questions by your minister, which they wanted to answer. But because their instructions bade no room, they made it clear that they would first report to the General Synod which would meet on 13th Feb. 2010. The letter of 9th Jan. 2010 then followed with: *"We hope that our churches give us a new mandate to speak further about the questions that we were asked. We do suppose that the following discussion will not be with Rev. Hoogendoorn personally, but with you as church council of the Gereformeerde Kerk Kampen, or a delegation on behalf of your church council. We have notified Rev. Hoogendoorn of this. We would greatly appreciate if you will consent to this follow-up discussion with us."*

This quotation indicates that deputies were of the opinion that a follow-up discussion was not to take place with your minister, but with you as church council. Moreover, your minister was also of this opinion, as you correctly mentioned in your letter.

That is the reason for the above-mentioned quote in the closing words: *"We would greatly appreciate*

if you will consent to this follow-up discussion with us.”

A logical question because you *as church council* had not yet pronounced if you were willing to have such a follow-up discussion. Hence the closing words at the end of the letter from the deputies: “*We look forward to your answer, giving some possible dates.*”

Our deputies have therefore presented to you the inviting question, whether you *as church council* will hold such a follow-up discussion. And they asked for an answer accompanied with some possible dates. Very simply, because on the 13th Feb. 2010 they hoped to be able to report to synod that the willingness to hold such a follow-up discussion with each other was also present with you *as church council*. To be able, if you had also given dates on which it could be held from your side, to make haste with the follow-up discussion and so the seeking of the true ecumenism.

Our deputies expected that they would receive mandate for such a follow-up discussion from the synod. They were therefore highly driven to get down to business, and were confident that this drive was shared by you.

When we wrote our letter of 21st June 2010 to you, the situation, according to us, was as follows:

1. Our deputies asked you in their letter for your approval for a follow-up discussion;
2. Our deputies wrote that they look forward to your answer;
3. One of them contacted your secretary beginning Feb. 2010 by phone, asking if the letter had been dealt with by you.

On 21st June there was not a single reply to our letter of 9th June 2010 known to us.

On 11th September we discussed your letter of 23rd July. We were surprised that there was no reference to our letter of 9th January 2010. That was the reason for us to decide to ask whether you had received our letter of 9th January 2010. We asked this via e-mail on 13th September. You answered via e-mail on 28th September. Besides other things, you informed us that “*At the same time Rev. Hoogendoorn contacted the deputies by phone, wherein he indicated that the church council agreed that they would submit it to synod and that the church council would await the synod decision.*”

We will now reconstruct the course of our contacts as follows:

on 23rd November 2009, a discussion is held between our deputies and your minister. During this discussion your minister says, and our deputies agree with it, that a follow-up discussion should take place with you *as church council*.

On 27th November 2009 it is made public that on 26th November 2009 a temporary church federation is formed by your congregation, the congregation of Zwolle and the so-called Matrix congregation.

On 9th Jan 2010 our deputies send you a letter in which they refer to the discussion with your minister and to ask if you can consent to it that a follow-up discussion shall not be held with your minister only, but with you *as church council*. As far as is known with the present deputies, they have not received an answer.

Building on, among other things, what your minister said during the discussion held on 23rd November 2009, that a follow-up discussion should take place with you *as church council*, the General Synod invites you per letter dated 1st April 2010 for a discussion.

By letter 24th May 2010, you answer that a discussion with you *as local church* is not possible as you, in the meantime, are part of a church federation.

By letter 21st June 2010 we answer your letter of 24th May.

In this letter we indicated that a discussion on ecclesiastical unity with the Temporary church Federation is not possible for us. The reason being that the Temporary Federation is partly formed by congregations that have broken away from DGK.

In your letter of 23rd July 2010, you give a different account of the contacts. You ask for correction and state that there is an enormous contradiction between our speaking and acting where the "true ecumenism according to Scripture and confession" is concerned.

Via e-mail of 13th September, we asked if our letter of 9th January 2010 was received by you.

Via e-mail of 28th September, you answer in the affirmative, also mentioning phone contact by your minister, which was, until now, unknown to us.

In connection with that what is stated by you, we have made enquiries with 4 of the 5 deputies for more detail. Because of the developments in the churches we could not be informed by the then 5th deputy, as he was no longer a member of our church Federation.

These 4 deputies who were present at this discussion are of the opinion that your minister indicated that the forming of a Temporary Ecclesiastical Federation was not in the offing. In our view this is in line with the advice given by your minister to hold a following discussion, not with him but with you as *church council*.

Likewise these 4 deputies explained that they had had no phone contact with your minister in which he would have informed you that you would wait for a decision from the synod.

We regret, that on looking back, we have to come to the conclusion that there are two contradicting explanations regarding the phone talk that your minister is supposed to have had with one of our deputies. We want to assume the good faith of all those concerned, and declare that we cannot get at the truth. We lay this conflicting explanation before the Lord, and with it, express the hope that this misunderstanding will not be detrimental to our contacts.

Concerning your reproach that there is an enormous contradiction in our speaking of the true ecumenism and our action, we ascertain that this does no justice to our intentions concerning our seeking you. For this, we only need to refer to the initiative that our deputies have shown to hold a discussion with your minister, that they, as church council, sent you a letter of invitation, and that the General Synod invited you for a discussion.

2. The account of the discussion.

According to your letter, your minister is being accused of dishonesty, whilst that is out of the question. Colleague van der Wolf would be able to confirm that.

As you have understood, during the discussion on the 23rd November 2009, your ministers namely, did not go into the deputies' questions regarding the forming of a temporary church federation. We are pleased that you indicate that as far as that is concerned, concrete questions are asked. These questions were namely asked because various indications had reached our deputies that a temporary church federation was about to be formed, of which you would be a part. And the answer was important to them regarding the question of how to deal with this further.

In your letter you indicate that both ministers did not go into those questions. Firstly we have to mention that such a manner of associating with each other surprises us. Accepting that you really are

seeking the true ecumenism, we cannot understand that you take on a reserved attitude about such an important subject. All the more because our deputies have, as you call it, asked you to vow not to make this move.

Here still the following remark: If the formation of the temporary church federation was in the offing, but your minister did not think it necessary at that moment during the discussion to go into it, how was he then able to give advice to hold a follow-up discussion with his church council? Have not then the deputies been misled? For didn't your minister after all, already know then that such a follow-up discussion was not possible because Kampen (Ichthus) would, within a few days, be part of a temporary church federation?

In your letter 24th May 2010 you write to us "**Therefore it seems obvious to us that this discussion is not to be held with a local church, one church of a broader federation, but with the federation itself, of which we as church of Kampen now are a part.**"

In the above we have bold-typed a few words to indicate that what seems so obvious to you, apparently was not so obvious to your minister on 23rd November 2009. And you apparently did not think it worthwhile to inform our deputies of that obvious fact as response to their letter of 9th January 2010. In the light of the above, we do not as yet see reason to cast doubt on the pronouncements of our deputies regarding the speaking of your minister concerning the forming of a temporary church federation.

3. Request for correction.

You will then also understand that at this moment we don't see the necessity to publicly correct our publications. You apparently take it that, what we had written, you had refuted, but we cannot follow you in that, also with a view to the fact that the phone talks were not recorded in writing. Your writing calls up the need for us to note the following: In the account of the true course of the contacts, you do not mention the letter from our deputies to your church council with the request for an answer.

As *church council*, you write to us that the **facts** concerning the account of the discussion with the ministers Hoogendoorn and van der Wolf are different, and that we have made a nasty accusation. But you were not present at the discussion. Is it then not too firm an assertion when you as *church council*, write that the **facts** are different? In the present situation, the word of both ministers are in opposition with the word of the deputies. We think that we need to speak differently and more carefully here.

4. Discussion at church federation level suggested and refused.

Concerning that what was stated by you in the first part of this point, we can refer to what we had noted about this earlier in this letter. When the letter from our deputies dated 9th January 2010 was received by you, you had namely already entered into a church federation. We establish that you did not bring to our deputies' attention that a discussion with you as local church was now no longer possible. As we explained, we did not know of your anticipating attitude and that is why we took the initiative to invite you via our letter of 1st April to hold a discussion. Because you wrote that you did not want to hold a discussion, it was no longer possible for us to give further verbal explanation. That is why we decided to further clarify this by letter. To create clearness towards our own congregation members, why we were not able to hold a discussion with the temporary church federation, we have published the correspondence with you. So that it is clear for everyone what the situation is.

Further you remark that, concerning your present sister-churches, you have sufficient with what is said and published in DE BAZUIN and at the synod. You also inform us that you know of the responsibility of the church council of Zwolle towards its own congregation in the matter of schism-making of those who come together in De Vijverhoeve.

You write that it is not necessary for you to know more.

In our letter we pointed out that your minister, in his speech “about the true ecumenism”, had stated correctly “*that in his view there was enough to first openly ascertain and to discuss how it can be that there is so much division within DGK*”.

In it, your minister states that he first wants to honestly discuss the noted division. We take it that he wants to be taken seriously, so may we then not have the expectation that he wishes to discuss this with us before he binds himself to those who have left us? Surely it cannot be so that openly ascertaining and **discussing** of the division observed by him, can be limited to the reading of DE BAZUIN and the Acts of the General Synod? In our view hearing both sides must mean more than this.

5. Summing up the present situation.

Your letter sketches for us a picture of the situation in which you as *church council*, without any discussion, judge the for us deeply painful division and schisms within our church federation. We must conclude that those who, by ignoring the ecclesiastical path, and follow their own way, are welcomed by you. And office-bearers (of De Vijverhoeve), who have openly broken their word, who incite the schism and actually break up the congregation, even before the church council of the neighboring church could pronounce their judgment over the imposed temporary suspension, can count on your approval. We cannot see this in any other way.

6. Appeal.

In this part you pass unfair justice over our doings. You namely establish with sorrow that there is an enormous contradiction between our speaking about the “true ecumenism according to Scripture and confession”, and our doing in our ecclesiastical practice. And you see it working schismatically inwardly and outwardly.

Brothers, your unjust verdict saddens us. Both you and we desire the unity of all God’s children, of all who are founded on the Word and confession in words and deeds. We want to take each other seriously in that, don’t we? Don’t we always express our intentions in the presence of our Lord? Then our yes is yes, and our no, no. Then we want to sincerely and uprightly strive for that unity. In that context we experience your unjust verdict as a new difficulty. Because in this you do not do us any justice. When there is talk of indistinctness, misunderstanding, or even disagreement about spoken words and about the course of the matters, then we must, together, before the eyes of the Lord, search for solutions. May then our human failure, and here we wish to emphatically state that also our own doings can give reason for comment, hinder the biblical calling to speak with each other about unity?

Therefore we ask you in all earnestness, to review your verdict, make this public, and as yet, go into discussion with us about these matters, loose from your referring to the temporary church federation. For further deliberation you may contact our deputy Adresvoering/Contacts Overheid/Binnenlandse Betrekkingen (ACOB); you then can approach br. G.H. Plaggenmars, Hesselinkkamp 11, 7692 AS Mariënberg. The General Synod will be closed on 16th Oct. 2010.

Finally we inform you that the content of your letter to us and our answering letter (possibly adapted), will be presented for publication in DE BAZUIN. A lot has been made public and we therefore think that it is important that also our view of the events is available.

Wishing you strength in your consideration.

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the General Synod of the De Gereformeerde Kerken,

Chairman, A. Admiraal
Second Clerk, C. Baan

Too early? Or was it too late?

Introduction

Not restoration but reformation; that is the title of an article that the editors placed on their website, Een-in-waarheid (United in Truth). According to the editors of Een-in-waarheid, the road to follow in a torn church situation, is the road of 'temporary dissention'. They write the following:

The commitment to rigid church federations among the ex-members of the GKV (Reformed Church liberated) in practice seems to lead to more divisions, as mentioned above.

The practice of the ex-GKV'ers of stipulating a rigid church federation, has led to more and more divisions, as we have written in the above sentences.

The unspiritual and non-confessional ease with which the congregations are torn apart has become a hindrance on the road to unity for all God's children. Especially in these days, this is so heartbreakingly confirmed and illustrated in the recent schism in the church of Daltsen; this not being a schism based on any breach of church doctrine.

Thus far the words of the editors.

Heartbreaking, I totally agree with that. It is heartbreaking to see how, until recently, we could experience the communion of saints at the table of our Lord and now we seem so distant to one another. Yes, it seems as if we are not able to tolerate each others company anymore. *What!?* Are you one of those from DGK, or, are you one of those from the GKN? That can't mean much good! That is how people think of each other and sometimes this is even said out loud. Unbelievable, that there can be so much division within church life and so much unspiritual behaviour among those who carry the name: children of God.

At the same time, the stand taken by the editors is remarkable. Namely, that this stipulating to a rigid church federation, in practice, seems to lead to the current divisions. The question arises; is this stand correct? Is it really so that the cause of the division is the practice of stipulation to a rigid church federation, or are there other causes that are at the bottom of all this?

Upon what do they base such a definite statement?

Is not the blame too easily placed with a rigid church federation?

Rigid or spacious?

A rigid church federation - is that really so? Is the church federation not a result of local churches seeking each other in the true ecumenism? Is it not local congregations that find each other in the unity of true faith and therefore together form a federation? See, and then we notice some of the glory of the catholic Church. Even though church life is hopelessly divided and the church here on earth is defiled with sins, yet we may see the glory, the splendour of Him who gathers His flock. Through Him and in Him the Church is being gathered. Then local churches will seek each other and together form a federation with each other. There we see the spaciousness again in which Christ has placed His church. Space in which we can be a hand and a foot to each other within that bond of local churches. Then we do not hide behind our church federations. Then we are not focused towards the inside, locked up within the musty walls of our church federation. No, we seek all those who, in truth and in all humility, want to remain faithful to the Bridegroom. Christ does not restore, but Christ builds. Are we prepared to be living stones of that construction? Or do we lock ourselves up in our own building... Let everyone test himself in this matter.

It still remains unclear what the editors actually mean with 'rigid church federations'. It sounds almost paradoxical; rigid - church federations. Bringing into practice true ecumenism is marked as being rigid. However, the question is: is the cause of the schism in Daltsen created by the rigid church federations or is there more going on? Perchance, the editors will be able to supply a definite answer concerning this dilemma. Anyway, I can give a definite answer to the aroused suggestion made by the editors, that DGK would demand of all new members that they must recognize the reformation of 2003 as "being the distinct work of the Lord."

The editors, apparently do not think light of the matter. It works as a shibboleth- to say it in the same manner. The way that a bull reacts to a red rag. Where the editors initially talk about it in carefully formulated terms of: 'it seems as if', I quote:

"Now it seems as if in DGK that recognizing the reformation of 2003 as being 'the distinct work of

the Lord', is becoming a shibboleth in order to be able to join and as a result, becomes an important stumbling block on the road to the gathering of all children....", in the next sentence this carefully formulated possibility is clearly put aside.

Now I do support this 'putting it aside', however, the question is, is this shibboleth reality or is it maybe a misunderstanding....

The question is: whether DGK requires of newcomers who wish to join, a shibboleth, that they recognize that the reformation of 2003 as a 'distinct work of the Lord.' Do the editors (whether consciously or not, we can only guess) not create an image that does not reflect the truth?

Is that distorted image maybe sketched in order to come to the conclusion that 'temporary dissention' seems the only way in the present situation? And is that distorted image maybe being used to justify the thought that joining DKG is not an option?

What has actually been the practice in DGK since 2003 when brothers and sisters, after liberation, wanted to join these churches? When wanting to join, were they explicitly demanded that they must first recognize the reformation of 2003 as being "the distinct work of the Lord"?

From my own personal experience I know that this is not the case at all. Brothers and sisters who, after liberation, wanting to join DGK were questioned about their motivation to liberate. Liberation and joining the Church of Christ must be a question of faith and not done due to all kinds of vague dissatisfaction or because of disagreements with the consistory. Liberation is an act of faith; that includes that you have become convinced that Christ does not call you in the GKV, anymore! That you want to follow Him, for He leads! He is the One who gathers His church from the beginning of the world until the end! This choice of faith means that you want to join the church where, also today, Christ is doing His church-gathering work, in the unity of the true faith. In considering that choice of faith one ended up with DGK. Because that is where it is recognized, in faith, that Christ gathers His church there, because that is where the marks of the true Church are found. He called them there. Was there then the explicit need to demand the recognition of the reformation of 2003 as being the 'distinct work of the Lord?' Complete nonsense! Who would demand that of brothers and sisters who wish to

join DGK? By their act of joining DGK they already acknowledge that that was where Christ was gathering His church. Since when is Christ gathering His church? Since 2003, or more recently in 2005 or 2009? Does Christ maybe follow us?

This so-called shibboleth of DGK, presented by the editors of Een-in-waarheid, seems to be nothing more than a camouflage technique. This unjustly presented shibboleth had a cause. And that cause lies in the statement, before joining or seeking union with DGK, that the reformation of 2003 occurred prematurely and cannot be seen as the work of Christ. This statement is seen by the some (brothers and sisters in Dalfsen) as a question and by others (D.J. Bolt) it is seen as a conclusion. On the other hand DGK said: if you make such a statement, then you deny the legitimacy of the origin and the legitimacy of the actual existence of DGK. But even more so, you deny the fact that Christ also, through the reformation of 2003, was continuing the work of gathering His church. The DGK stood up in defense against such a denial. DGK has not made an irresponsible demand, but they have stood up to resist the disqualification of the reformation of 2003. A disqualification that approached them from the outside. In that way DGK resists anything that may bring damage to the work of Reformation of Christ.

Woe be to those, if, before the face of the Lord, the reformation of 2003 was unjustified, and instead was a church schism; then confession of sins must be made. He who tears apart the church of Christ commits treason. He who unnecessarily tears asunder the flock of Christ and withdraws himself from the flock, places himself automatically outside the church community of Christ. Even though all intentions may be well meant.

Insecure or secure space?

We must be and may be thankful that Christ calls and preserves His sheep through different means and at different moments in history, and that He calls them to obedience. The past also teaches us that the Lord, when, according to Him the time is right, will give to each one personally the correct insight. For the one, that moment is today, for another it has already occurred and for a third person that moment still has to come. All according to the sovereign good-pleasure of Christ. And for the wealth of His church assembly. That is, with all surety, the product of His church gathering work.

But let us not fool ourselves. Christ gathers His church here on earth and that we are always able to test. Also now in this age when the manner in which the church is viewed has been made murky by human failure and our sins. Has it ever been different? Are you able to test if the reformation of 2003 has been the work of the Lord? Yes you are able. DGK has namely, given extensive accountability. Will you then be bound by your conscious because that moment was, for you personally, too early? No, you won't be. Still today you will discover that in 2003, the struggle was not fought for you personally. It would be foolish to deny that. There is space for that, but there is also space for that in the opposite direction. Those that fought the good fight, also in 2003, have followed after Christ, in faith. The one was personally convinced that it was too early, the other it was not. Christ continues His church-gathering work. We are placed in this spaciousness, by faith that is worked in us by His Spirit. And then we may and must go on together. That is the work of church-gathering. We must be faithful to that One Shepherd, despite the difficult characters, despite the many differences of opinion.

It is sad that, because of the many breaches and schisms in the church since 2003, we were not able to be a recruiting church. In that there have been many sins committed and we must confess our sins before the Lord.

We, little sheep, are often disobedient and stubborn and want to have it done our way. If we would only be prepared to be the least one... how great and rich our Savior would be. He must grow and we must become the least one. The question that each must personally answer is: are we prepared to seek each other in truth, faith, hope and love? To genuinely seek each other? To stand together in that space, and, in that space live together as one church federation?

Forget or forgive

The church has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The church is safe in His hands. Christ says it himself:

"I am the good Shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold I must bring them also, and they shall heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd."
(John 10:14-16 RSV)

Christ therefore knows His sheep and no-one can rob them out of the hands of His Father. Christ Himself adds these words : "For I and the Father are one." His pierced hands are therefore also the hands that will not let go of His sheep. His pierced hands , His suffering and His death on the cross at Golgotha are the guarantee and surety for His bride. The surety that we were dearly bought. Bought and paid for by His precious blood. What a wealth for His church, also in 2011. Safe in His hands.

Christ's church-gathering work continues until the last sheep has been gathered to the flock. The unity of that flock is a fact, and that is why we must seek unity with all true believers. We have a calling, dearly paid for, to seek unity with those that stand on the same foundation. Are you then able to throw overboard the past of church denominations? Can you forget the past and then, at the some point in the future, in 2011 or later, come together again, on the basis of the same foundation? No, fellowship with each other, fellowship with God is possible only after confession of sins. That counts for our personal life with the Lord, but also in the life of the bride. We as church of Christ, may radiate as His bride. We are a church, dearly bought with His precious blood, and must therefore be a church that confesses her sins and then those sins will be forgiven. In that way the communion with God and with the Shepherd will continually be renewed. Only in that way can church denominations find each other.

Conclusion

Does DGK form a rigid church federation? Until today I dare to give a negative answer to that question. No, she does not. She seeks unity with all who serve the Lord in the truth. She does not shut herself up in her own church federation and she does not demand of those, that seek unity with her, an agreement that goes beyond Scriptural truth. I hope that this alleged requirement of DGK will once and for all be banned to the realm of fantasy. And that this so called requirement will no longer be an obstacle that stands in the way of coming to church unity.

Temporary dissenting.... Where unity is called for, we must be obedient to our Shepherd. In dependence on Him. Temporary dissenting based upon the facts that the editors of Een-in-Waarheid mention, seems to me not to be the right path to follow. Let us not put up smokescreens where they should not be...

Christ gathers His church. Do we hinder Him or do we allow ourselves to be used as instruments in His hands? If we, in faith, seek Christ, also in His church-gathering work, then we will not look for a church where there are only cute sheep. Then we do not focus on the different personalities in the church, and we do not look for a church federation where we know that so-and-so is not there, then we do not flee from a church because it doesn't suit us... No, none of all that. Let us stop making human, mathematical reasonings, how well intended they may be. Rigid church federation....or temporary dissenting.... Let us beware of specific resoluteness and that we act out of that.... do not look for true ecumenism in people or in church federations, but in Jesus Christ the Cornerstone of the Church. Do not wait until the end of the year or the following year, but today, now, follow that command!. That is reformation!

Let us lift our hearts on high, focused upon Jesus Christ, who pleads for us in heaven at the right hand of His Father. In that way we seek the true unity,

right through all the storms that batter against the church today. The church will prevail until the end. What a comfort and encouragement. A multitude that no one can number. What a glorious prospect.

"A great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(Revelation 7:9 and 10. RSV)

His loves us.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates."

(Revelation 22:14 RSV)

Michiel Sneep
Bleiswijk, January 25, 2011



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Reply to Velthuis (1)

An article, under the heading “Reply”, written by the brothers A. van Egmond and L. Menninga, has been published on the website of ‘De Bazuin’. It is a reaction to the first 2 parts of the brochure ‘*Radicaal Gereformeerd of Gereformeerd Radicalisme*’ (1 and 2) (Radically Reformed or Reformed Radicalism), by A. Velthuis as was published on the website of EeninWaarheid.

The following is a summary of the above-mentioned response by the brothers Van Egmond and Menninga.

This response begins with stating that for brothers and sisters of the same house, it must be a condition that they adhere to mutual agreements, so that our ‘yes’ must be ‘yes’, and our ‘no’, ‘no’. Self-reflection goes with this, but also bowing together to the Word of God. The making public of sad dissensions within the church by people and groups who have felt that they had to break away from their brothers and sisters in the Lord, damages the church-gathering work of Christ. Seeking justice outside the appropriate path is unscriptural. And the path via ecclesiastical administration of justice has not been followed to the end in the cases mentioned by Velthuis (Zwijndrecht, Bergentheim and Zwolle). Velthuis thinks that the ecclesiastical path is impassable. But his arguments don’t hold. Now that the cases have been made public, with distorted views, and Christ’s Name is being damaged through this, the brothers have felt that more openness, within limits, is necessary. For it concerns the honour of the Lord.

Both brothers are convinced that The Reformed Churches (DGK) try, in everything, to subject itself to God’s Word, the Confessions and the current Church Order. The main point in it is the pure preaching of God’s Word, the pure administration of the sacraments and the exercising of church discipline. Certainly the latter is in conflict with the modern spirit of the times, where we would rather withdraw from it than be admonished.

Next there is a chapter that is devoted to the church, because Velthuis claims that in his opinion, different views on the church is the ‘possible underlying cause’ of all the problems in The Reformed Church. It is such, according to Velthuis, that far-reaching conclusions are being linked to the terms ‘congregation-in-the-making;

congregation-in-formation; church-in-principle; church-in-formation. He refers here to the article ‘*Herderlijke Zorg*’ (Pastoral Care) by Rev. S. de Marie in De Bazuin of 4th April 2007, and in a (foot)note he refers, among other things, to the Acts of GS Mariënberg, Art. 41, page 118.

He is, however, mistaken, because, in these documents, it shows clearly that also concerning a church without offices, right through to synod decisions, there is talk of ‘congregation’ and even of ‘church’. But also that in DGK one is of the opinion, in agreement with various respected authorities on canon law, from the past, that a congregation without offices is not complete, is unfinished.

If Velthuis states that: “*And that is why it is inaccurate to speak of a ‘congregation-in-formation’ if far-reaching conclusions are linked to it*”, the brothers, on the other hand, state that: “It is inaccurate to speak of ‘church’ when there are no office-bearers, if there are far-reaching conclusions linked to it, such as happens in the example of Zwijndrecht.”

Detailed reports are being written about Zwijndrecht, as was also done recently by Dr. P. van Gorp in De Bazuin.

In a way Velthuis is right if he claims that the view on the church is a possible cause for the problems with Zwijndrecht. But in a different manner than he himself indicates.

The view on the church of a majority in Zwijndrecht was namely that the congregation was a complete, independent congregation, even if there were no office-bearers. This was, due to the absence of office-bearers, sufficiently overcome by the office of all believers. According to them it was therefore unnecessary to place itself under the care and discipline of a neighbouring consistory. According to them Art. 40 of the Church order refers merely to possible assistance that can be given by the neighbouring consistory if it is requested by Zwijndrecht.

That is why a schism came about in the congregation between those who, in accordance with the classis decision, wanted to place themselves under the care and discipline of the neighbouring consistory and those who did not accept the consistory-care

of the neighbouring church. As a result of this schism, the minority decided to attend the worship services in Berkel and Rodenrijs. With the going of the minority, the majority thought that unity was restored enough to now ask the assent of classis to constitute the offices. In that situation classis had no choice but to refuse this request and try to work towards restoration of the peace in Zwijndrecht.

According to Velthuis, the major assemblies had, in this way, in fact deployed a hierarchical attitude in relation to the local churches. God's Word, however, teaches us differently, such as in Proverbs 17:14. "*The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.*" (NKJV) And also in Matt. 5:9 where it says: "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*"

When the offices are constituted, a congregation is officially incorporated in the bond of churches. At the annual church visitation the question is always asked whether the decisions of the major assemblies are accepted as being settled and binding and whether this is put into practice.

Classis however, before it even got that far, had to deal with a congregation in which the majority decided not to accept a classis decision, according to its intention and in reference to its contents, as being binding, but to follow an own course.

Finally the brothers write that they are aware that their reaction will not go down well with some or with many. In fact there seems to be an almost

uncontrollable urge to make public everything that happens in the churches, and especially in DGK and to criticize (sometimes by those who in the meantime criticize 'from a safe distance', i.e. -those who have left DGK). As the brochure of Velthuis shows, one does not refrain from harsh denunciations in the matter either. Where ecclesiastical assemblies are put down and put aside as being hierarchical, and the decisions taken by them, in which confidential matters are at stake, are denounced in public. This, without themselves, in one way or another, having been directly involved in the referred-to matters, or have been allowed access to the documents related to the matter.

The result of this sort of writing will be, the Lord forbid, nothing more than that the 'ordinary' congregation members will despairingly ask themselves if there is perhaps an element of truth in all this.

In this way distrust can be aroused and fed in- and outside DGK.

We warn strongly against this development. This does not mean though, that they are of the opinion that no criticism is allowed to be brought forward on decisions and dealings of major assemblies.

But for that we have a Church Order. The Articles 30, 31 and 33 instruct us perfectly how we must deal with possible criticism in a dignified and especially in an ecclesiastical manner.

Reply to Velthuis (2)

The ecclesiastical path

In the second reaction to Velthuis' brochure: "*Radically Reformed or Reformed Radicalism*", the brothers A. van Egmond and L. Menninga go into the matter of the church boundaries and the criticism on the functioning of the federation in its meetings.

Church boundaries

Mention is also made of the case of church boundaries that has kept the church of Zwolle

and environs occupied for a long time. According to Velthuis, grave mistakes have been made and a number of brothers and sisters have been unjustly admonished to seek the brotherhood in the place or area where they live. Through this, it is supposed that the mutual relationships understandably has become bitter.

His criticism is refuted and the reality is pointed out to him, namely that some brothers and sisters

drive past the sister-church on Sundays to travel to a (larger) congregation further away. Brothers and sisters, who sometimes even live in the same town and yet travel past where their own brothers and sisters have gathered together. Brothers and sisters of the same house! The application of Velthuis' so-called "healthy fundamental rule" is putting things upside-down. The well-being of the congregation is NOT promoted in this way, but this lack of brotherliness and lack of love is being approved. With a semblance of justice, the purpose of the rules from 1892 would be frustrated in this way.

Ecclesiastical path

Next, Velthuis directs his convictions to the organization of the federation and denounces the small number of classes, from which a synod then has to be elected.

According to Velthuis, at least three classes are necessary, whilst DGK has only two. The authors of this 'REPLY' rightly ask why he writes so much about the forming of a synod by two classes, when it has been used much longer in the world elsewhere. A comparable situation has been customary in the Australian churches for many years.

Is it correct that Velthuis thinks there is talk of an 'ecclesiastical highway' or 'summary proceedings' because the synod now assembles every two years? But then he forgets that in the past, a body of appeal, namely the Particuliere Synode (Regional Synod) assembles each year. So why use such strong terms as 'summary proceedings', 'curtailing and cutting short the ecclesiastical path', whilst these are simply matters that can be discussed in an open and honest manner via the ecclesiastical path?

Velthuis also reproaches DGK that during GS Zwolle 2007, not enough effort was made for unanimity, that matters were pushed through, such as in the case of Zwijndrecht, without sufficient discussion, all under the pretext of an appeal on Art. 31 of the Church Order. This is a nasty suggestion because, for as far as the authors of this REPLY know, there has never been a delegate at GS Zwolle who indicated that the matter concerned was not thoroughly discussed before a final decision was made.

Velthuis also complains that, due to the rules set out by GS Zwolle, the lodging of a second appeal, the rights of consistories and church members seem

to be restricted on a part. The authors promise that they will do their utmost to have this rule, which, on further consideration, seems to have an unintentional omission, as yet, adapted.

Zwijndrecht schism-church?

Velthuis also writes in detail about the fact that classis South-West concluded that the congregation of Zwijndrecht had placed itself outside the bond of churches. According to Velthuis this was not the truth. According to him it was classis that ex-communicated the brothers and sisters whilst brushing aside the appointed consistory. But Velthuis forgets that the majority of the congregation had decided to only accept decisions of major assemblies as binding, after coming to that same decision in their congregational meeting. Even though the congregation had been placed under the care of the neighbouring consistory. It is then hard to state that such a congregation belongs to the bond of churches.

Velthuis should, with this in mind, rather be amazed about the patience that Classis South-West has shown, also when it had been requested earlier to conclude that Zwijndrecht stood outside the bond of churches. Classis namely, did not want to make this decisive statement, to give Zwijndrecht every chance to still appeal to GS Mariënberg 2005.

Restoration of unity

Velthuis writes that none of the matters mentioned by him are cause for separation in the church. The separations in DGK are therefore not reformation, but schism-making. Remark duly noted! Yet he concludes that all decisions made by consistories and major assemblies in DGK regarding the congregations in Zwijndrecht, Bergentheim/Bruchterveld and Zwolle must yet be examined, for it could be that others were cast out or office bearers were suspended or dismissed on wrong grounds or in a wrong manner. Lawfully made decisions by ecclesiastical assemblies are being openly brought into discussion. Schism-making is being extenuated because mistakes could have been made on both sides.

It is disappointing that a brother from outside DGK (we take it, in good faith) as yet creates doubt and suspicion in this manner in DGK, concerning lawfully made decisions by ecclesiastical assemblies.

It is disappointing as well, because Velthuis himself

was closely involved with one of the schisms, namely the break in the congregation of Zwolle.

However, the 'Vijverhoeve' congregation believes that church-separating matters are at issue. Also DGK is convinced that, where the temporary church federation is concerned, this is the case, so that an official discussion (at general synod level) with that church federation cannot come under discussion.

Not because DGK are of the opinion that major assemblies are official office-bearers assemblies (they are not present as office-bearers as such, but represent the churches), as Velthuis would have one believe, but because the General Synod of DGK would then ignore the judgment of the minor assemblies with regard to the office bearers in the church federation. A general synod that is genuinely serious about the pronouncements of minor assemblies will not pretend that those minor assemblies did not pronounce any suspensions and

dismissals. If the ecclesiastical path is not followed by the suspended and dismissed office-bearers, it is left to the minor assemblies as to how they must further deal with this where these churches are concerned.

Conclusion

The suggestion is sometimes made as though one is not safe in DGK because of so-called radicalism within the church government and the alleged extremism. But this is a lie. Certainly, we have our sins and shortcomings. But we wish to do nothing more than to live for and with the LORD. Close to His Word and in complete dependence of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He, in His bounteous grace, grant that all who want to do likewise, shall be gathered in the one Flock that Christ is gathering. To the honour and praise of our faithful God and Father in heaven.

A. van Egmond, L. Menninga



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